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Deconstruction Series

Blancpain

The Original Fifty Fathoms
Divers Watch

by

**THE NAKED
WATCHMAKER**

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The Original Fifty Fathoms Divers Watch

The original Fifty Fathoms carried the trademark “LIP Blancpain”. LIP was a watch retailer in Paris and manufacturer in Besançon. Jean-Jacques Fiechter, Blancpain's CEO from 1950 until 1980, a diver himself, developed the Fifty Fathoms model.

On the following pages is an example of the original Fifty Fathoms divers watch which was manufactured in the early 1950's.

Incabloc, ie shock protection for the balance pivots of the balance staff, was developed in the late 1940's. This was a considerable evolution in practical watchmaking. Prior to Incabloc, when watches received shocks, the balance pivots could be easily broken and the watch would stop. This was such a phenomena that the military would employ watch technicians to repair the watches that were being damaged in action. Antimagnetic/waterproof & shockproof, even automatic, as engraved below were all technological advances of the period and used as strong selling points.



This watch was restored & photographed at Blancpain in their restoration workshop.



J.P.
BLANCPAIN
Fifty Years

AUTOMATIC
INCABLOC



ANTI-MAGNETIC WATERPROOF SHOCK PROTECTED
LIP
BLANCPAIN
50 FATHOMS
FAB. SUISSE
STAINLESS STEEL
498393
AUTOMATIQUE



LIP
BLANCPAIN
Fifty Fathoms

ROTOMATIC
INCABLOC

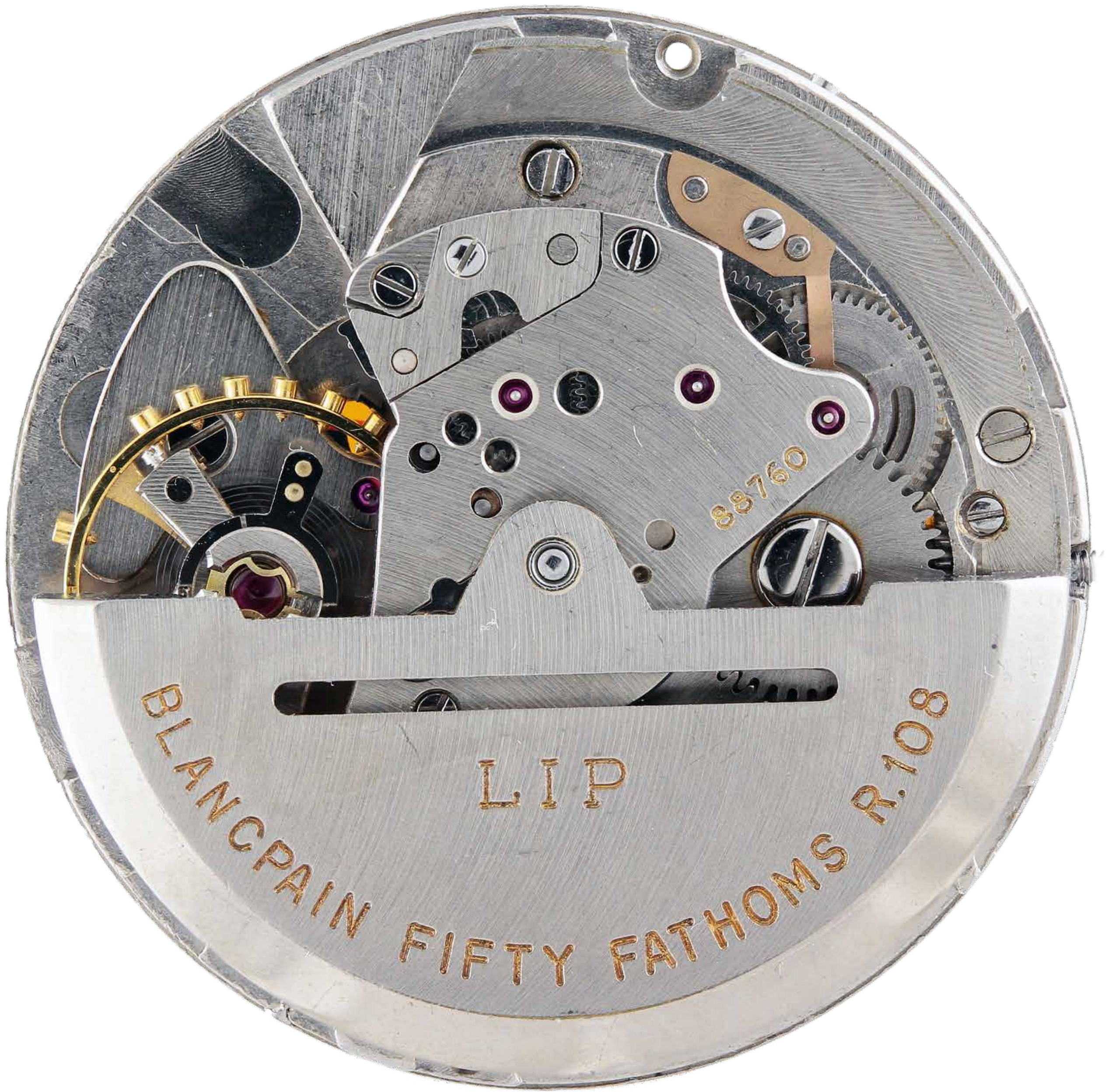
45

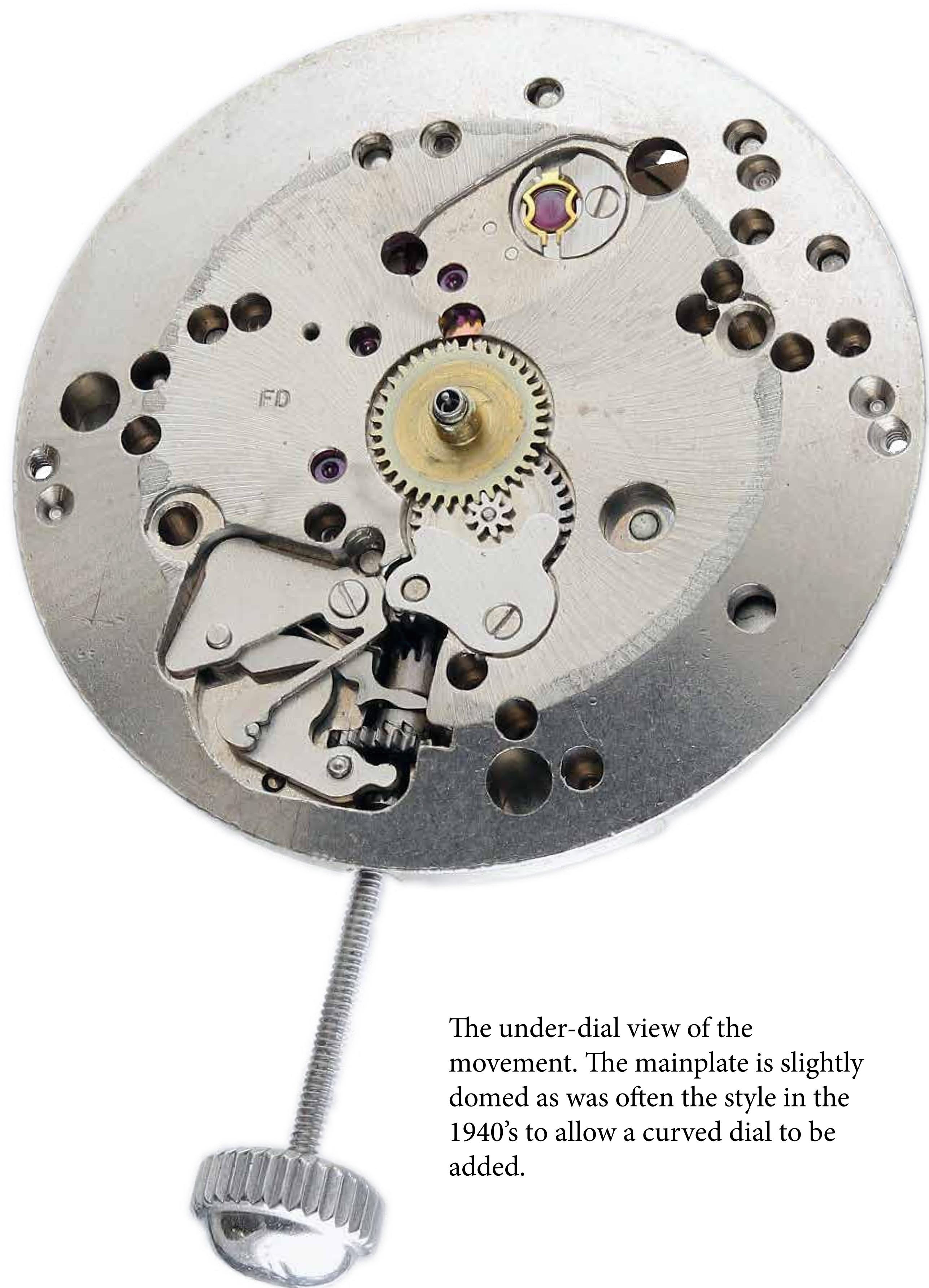
The soft iron cover (cage) protecting the movement from magnetism. The pip, or button in the centre would push against the inner case back holding the movement in place.

IN CASE
OF OPENING
THE WATERTIGHTNESS
OF THIS WATCH MUST BE
RE-CHECKED BY AN OFFICIAL
BLANCPAIN
FIFTY FATHOMS
DEALER

PATENTS + PENDING

The fully assembled movement.

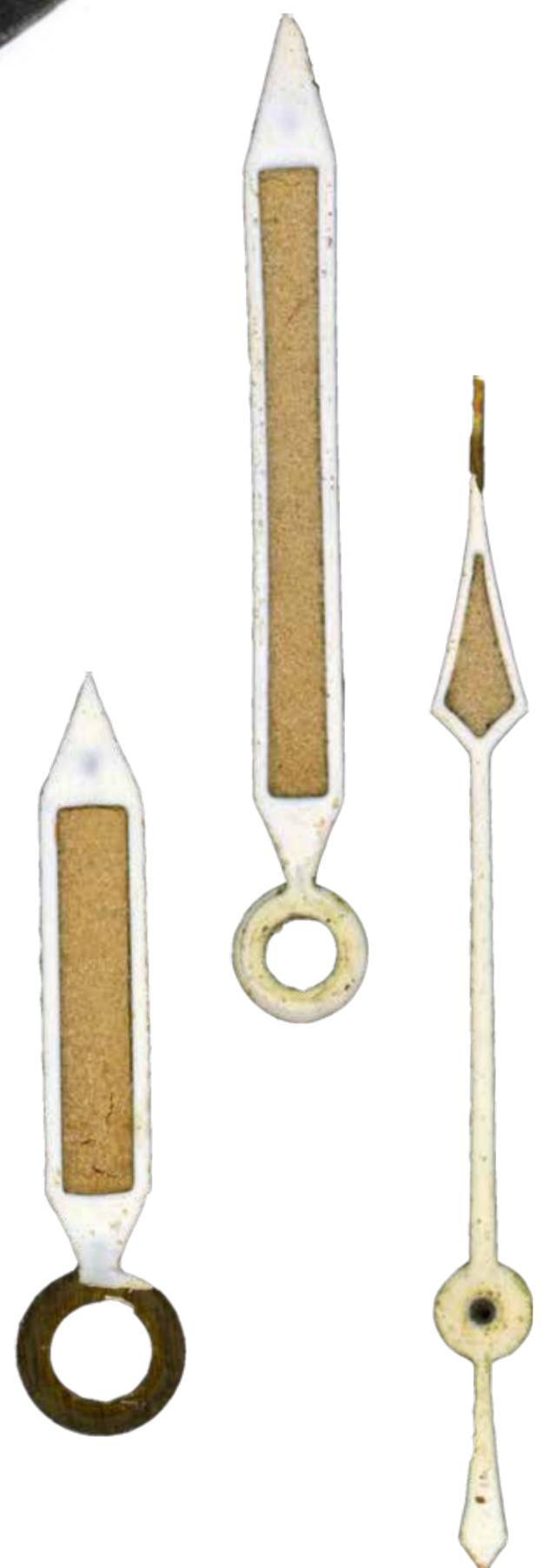




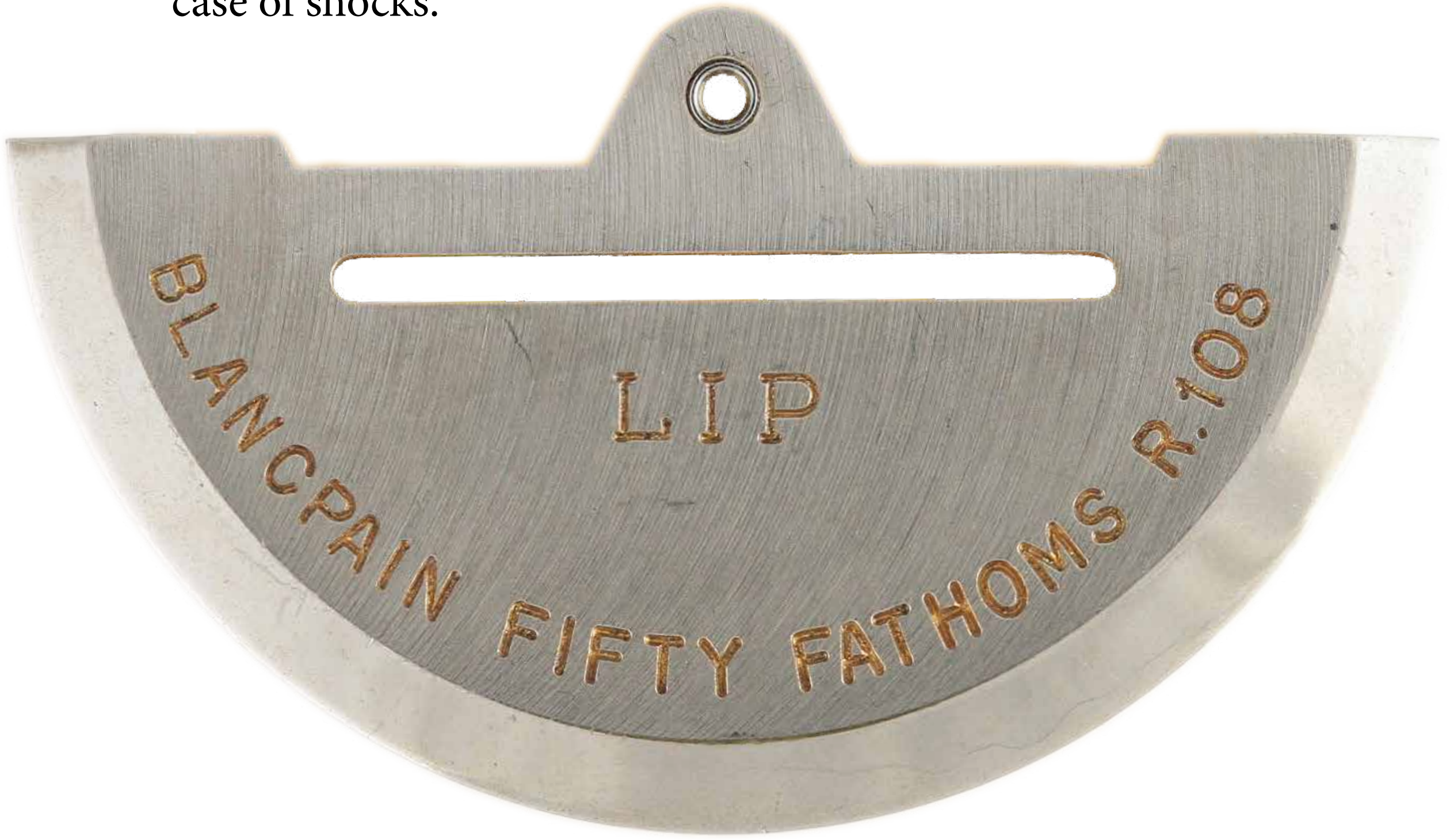
The under-dial view of the movement. The mainplate is slightly domed as was often the style in the 1940's to allow a curved dial to be added.



The dial, with luminous indexes printed onto the surface. The original luminous materials used, specifically for the military due to their norms, were highly radioactive, more-so than for models which were made for the public, as were the hands.



The rotor weight. The milled out section below the pivoting point for the rotor creates a spring section in the rotor to allow the rotor to flex avoiding the rotor axel to be broken in case of shocks.

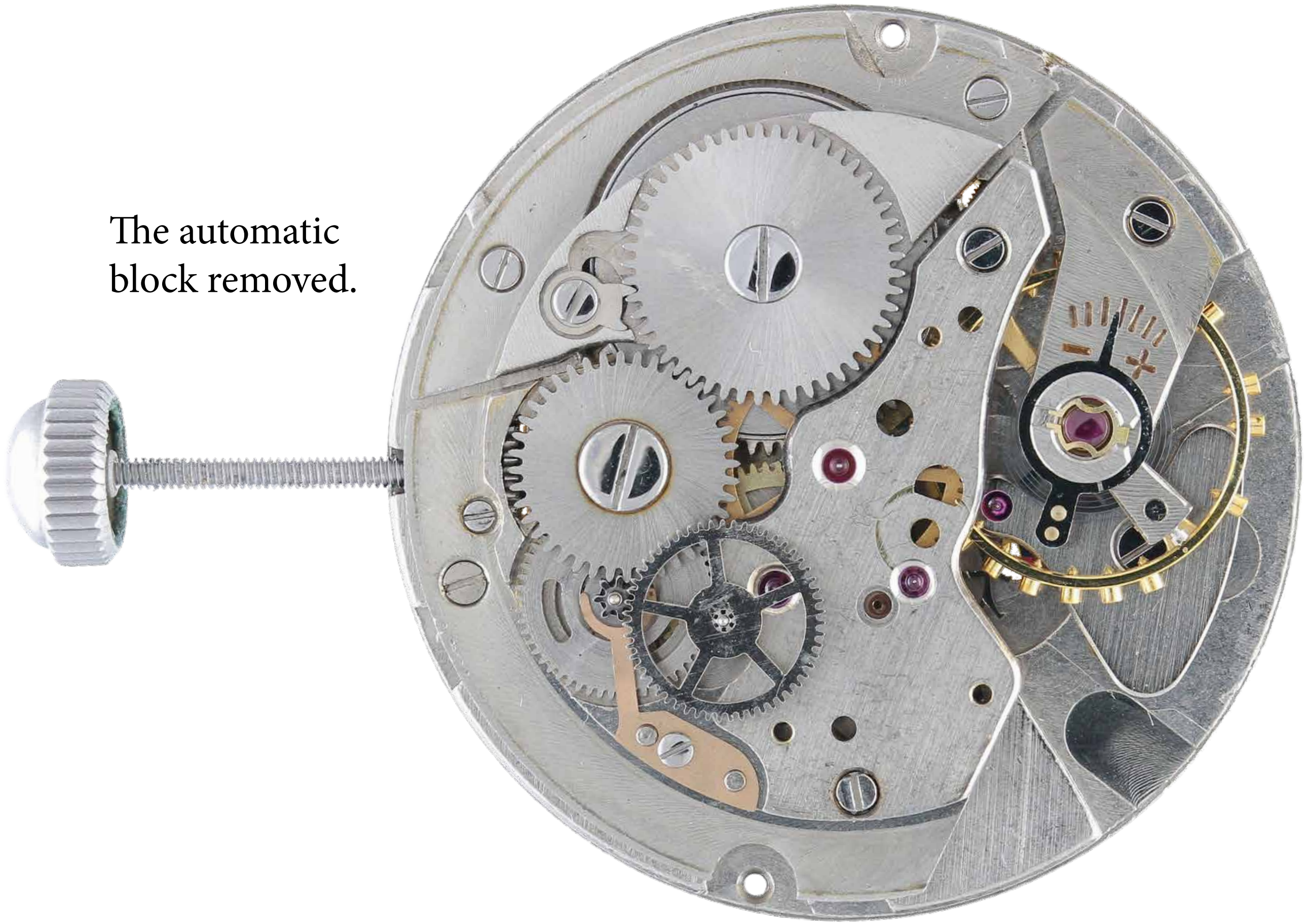


Cut aways showing the position of the Swiss lever escapement and part of the automatic winding mechanism.

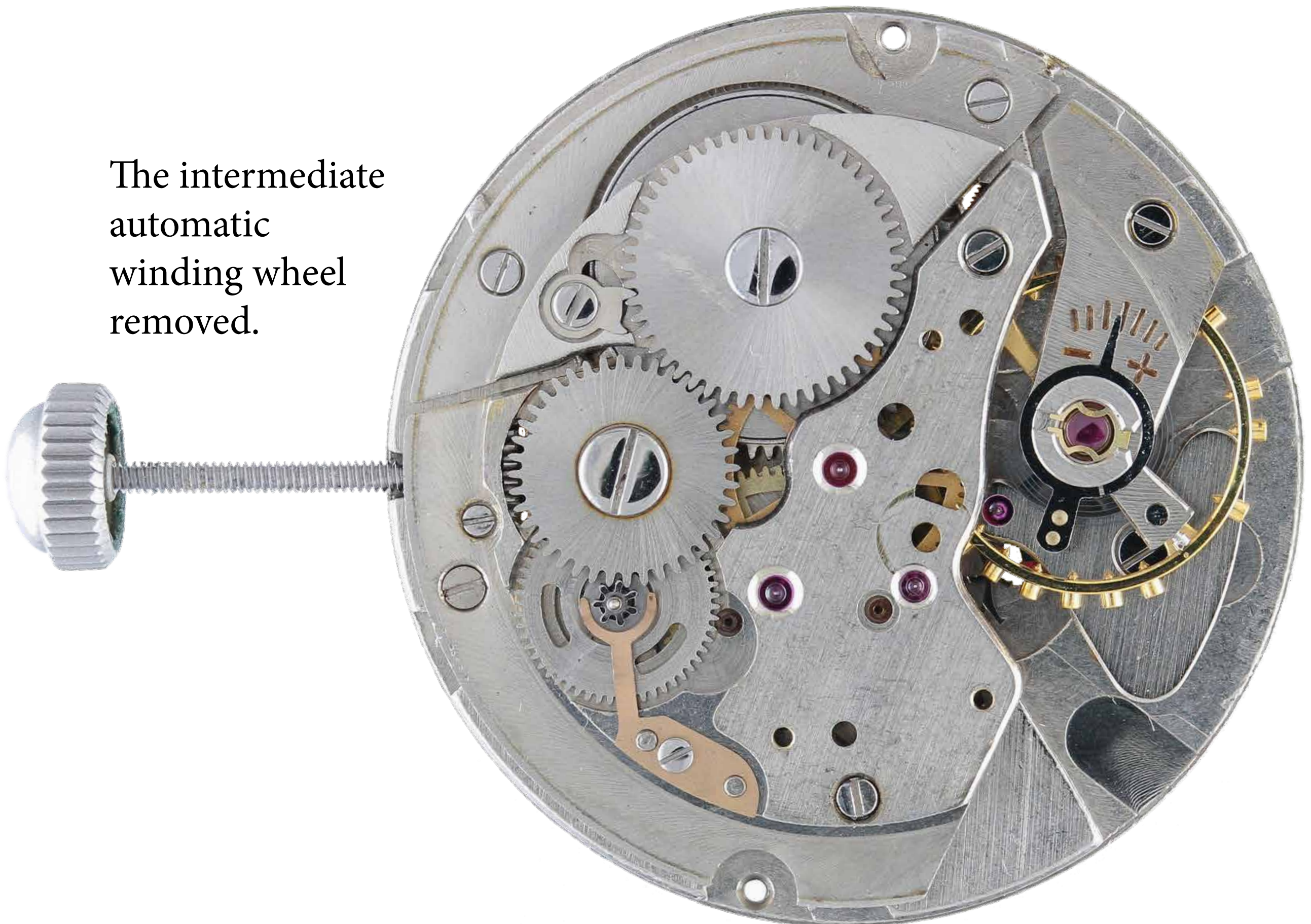


The movement in this sequence of images is being dismantled for the first time and is not in its final serviced state.

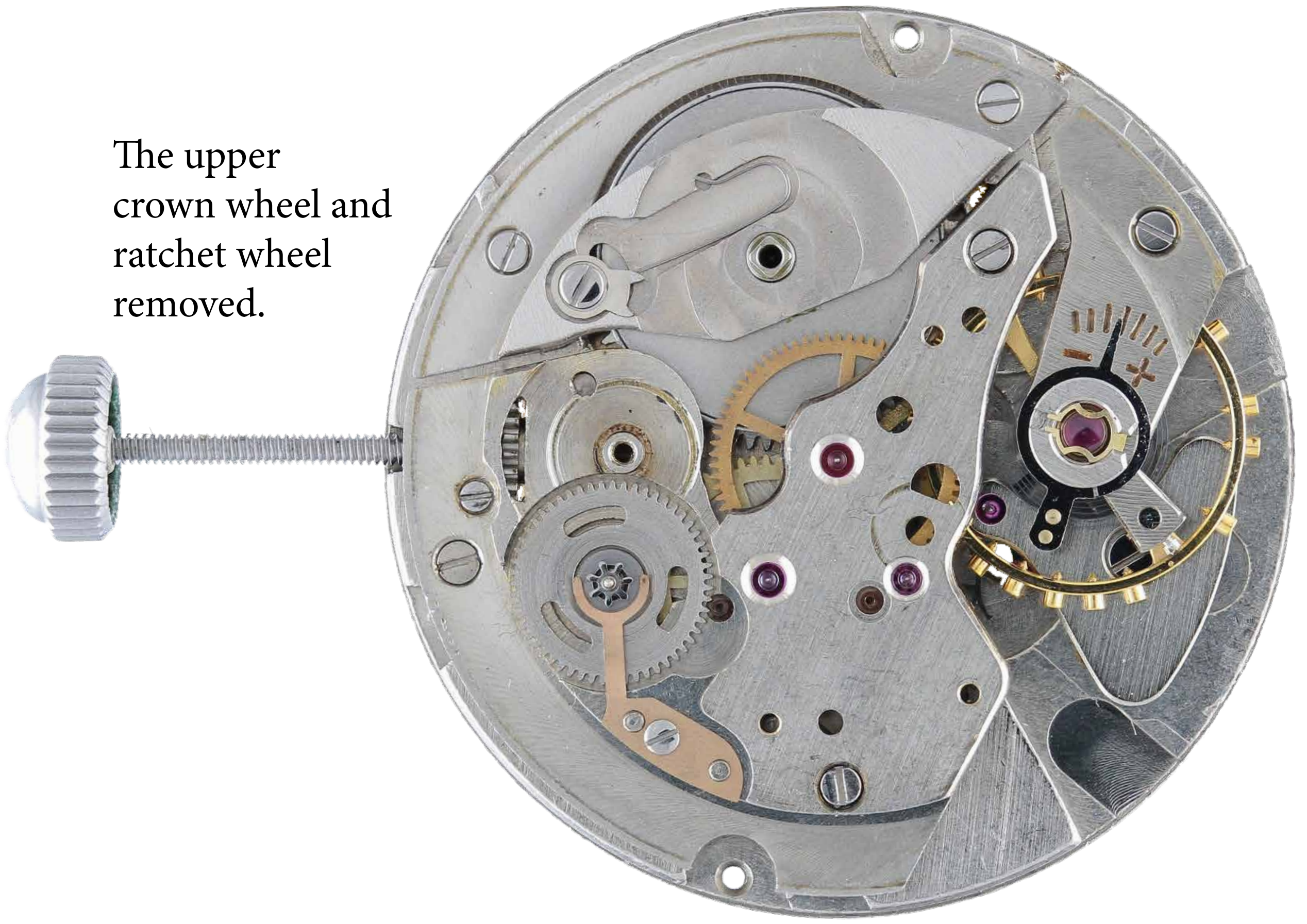
The automatic
block removed.



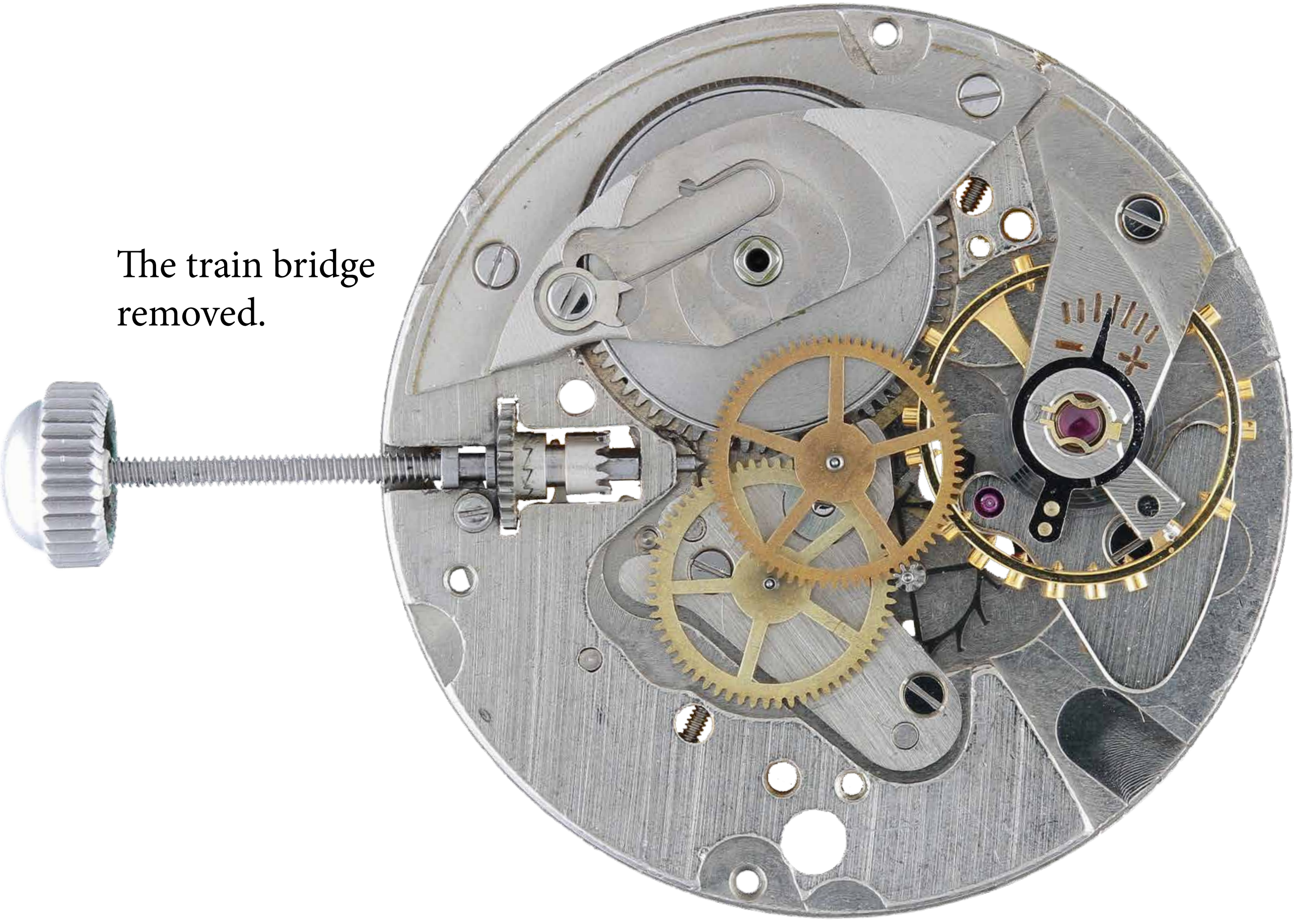
The intermediate
automatic
winding wheel
removed.



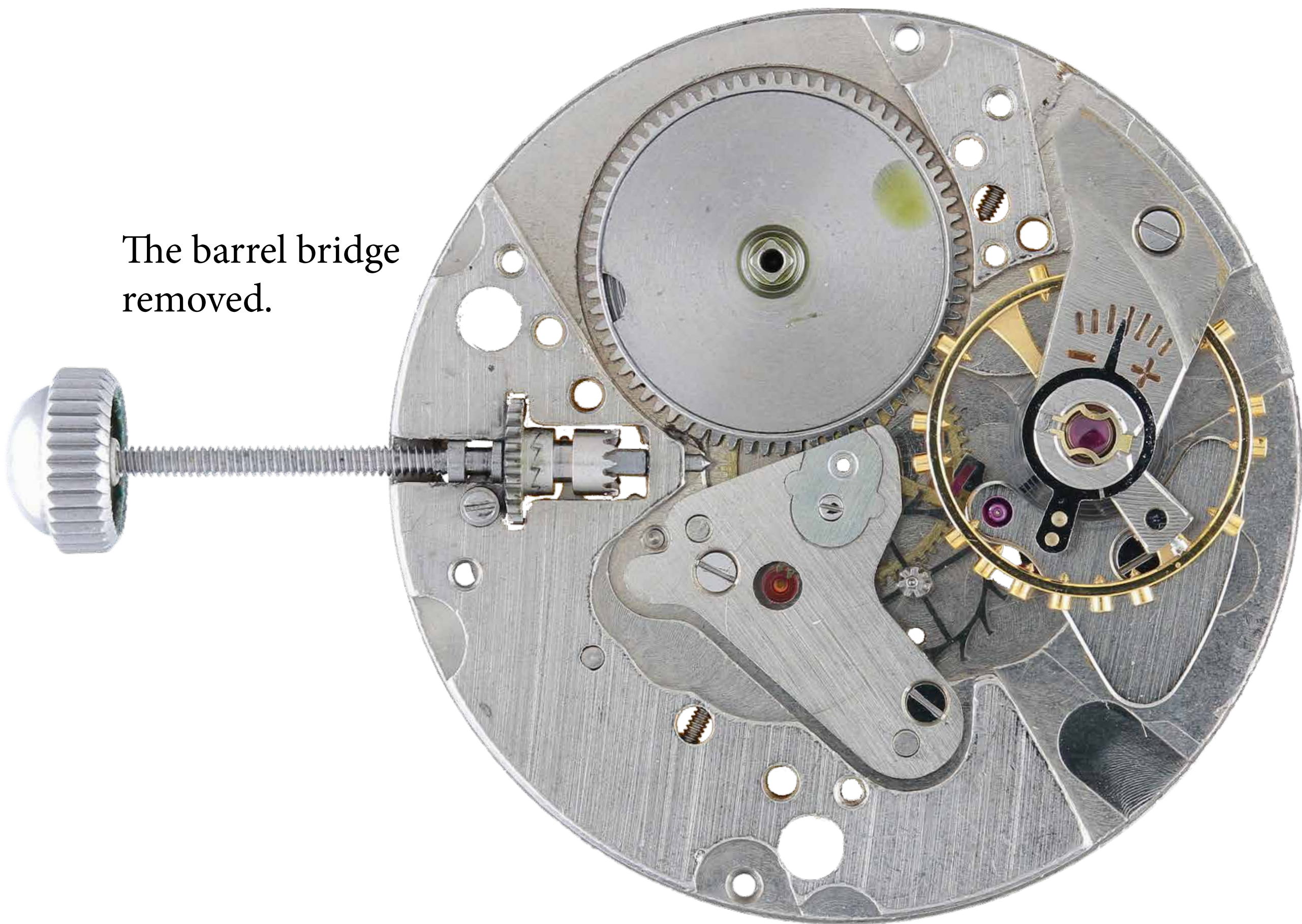
The upper crown wheel and ratchet wheel removed.



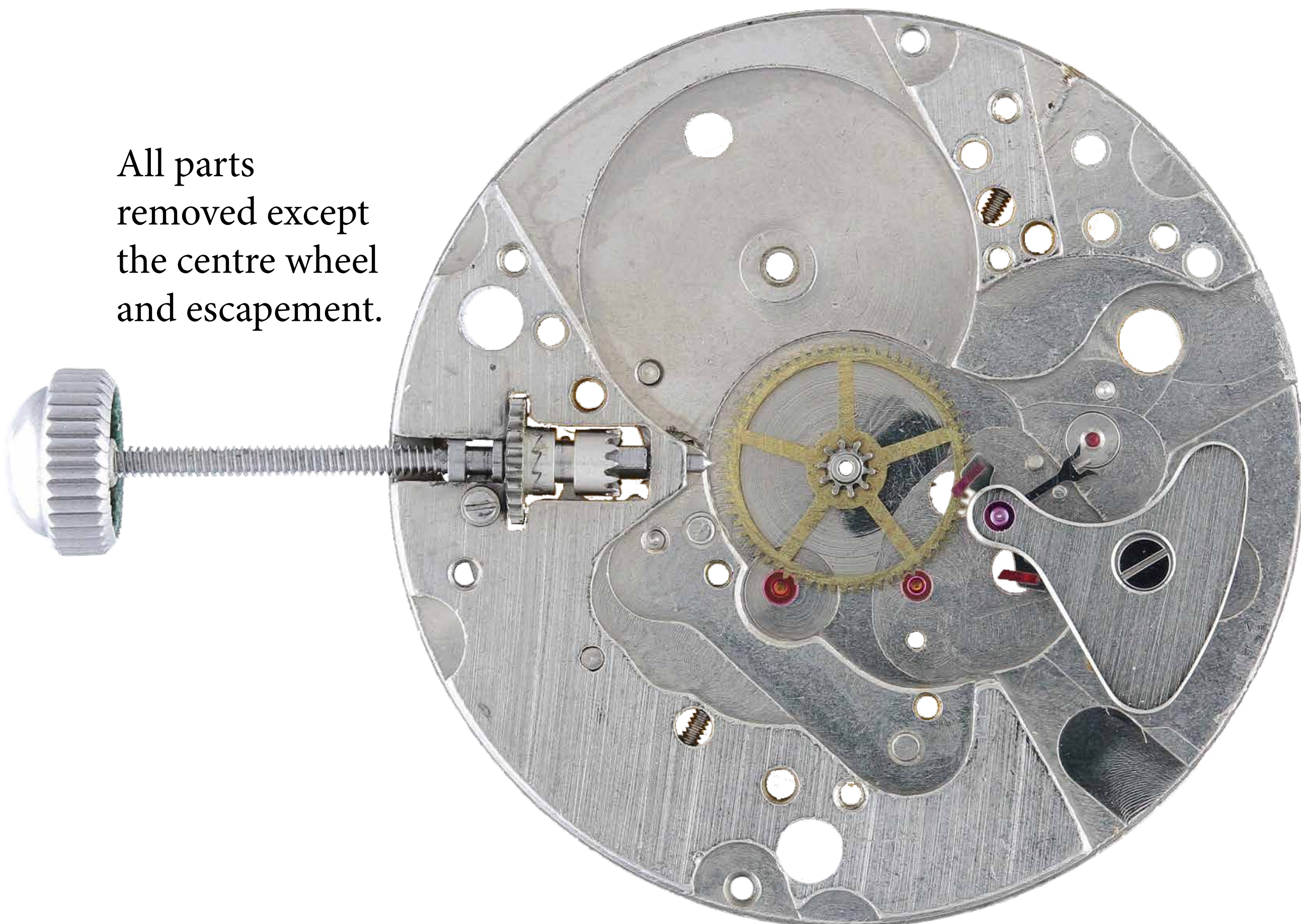
The train bridge removed.



The barrel bridge removed.

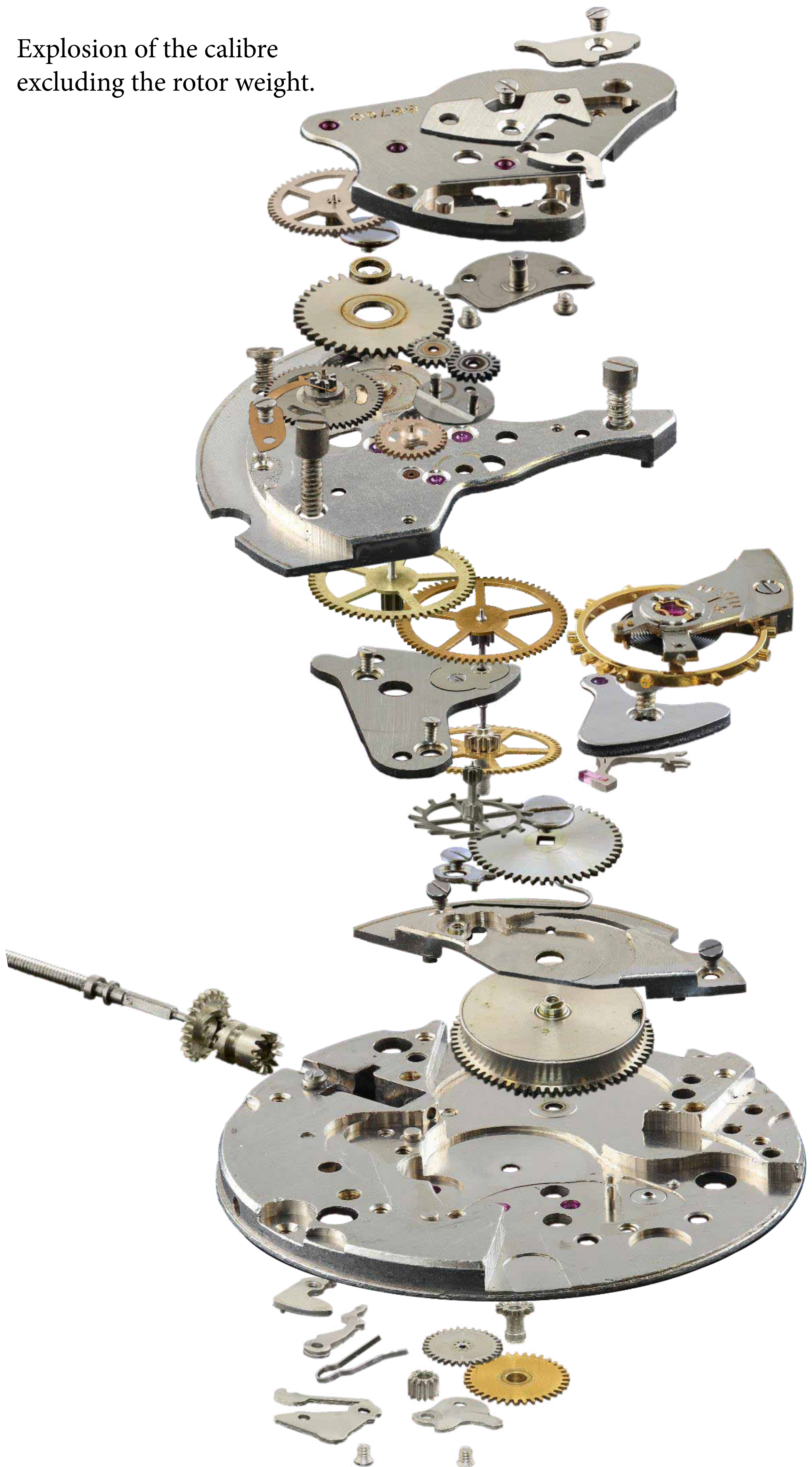


All parts removed except the centre wheel and escapement.



The order of disassembly is for photographic purposes only. When servicing a calibre the order is different, removing the balance and escapement first.

Explosion of the calibre
excluding the rotor weight.



Summary

The Fifty Fathoms shown in this book is one of the first to have been made in the early 1950's. By comparison to the modern version, it is of a far inferior quality both in finishing and technical execution, showing the distance that the contemporary version has evolved. It is, however, a classic example of the beginning of the evolution of the divers watch and represents one of, if not the very first official divers watch to be made in horological history. Despite being crude by comparison to its modern relations, it still works effectively as a time-keeper with the exception of the ability to perform its function beneath the waves as it once did.



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